

NEWS RELEASE

FOR RELEASE

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Virginia Celebrates Older Americans Month *“Aging Well, Living Well” includes awareness of DPOR anti-fraud hotline*

RICHMOND – In recognition of May as national Older Americans Month, the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation (DPOR) reminds consumers of its Hotline for Older Virginians. This year's theme – *Aging Well, Living Well* – celebrates senior citizens who are living longer, healthier, and more productive lives.

As the state agency responsible for regulating jobs that pose a threat of fraud or public harm, DPOR works to prevent elder fraud and discrimination. Older Virginians are often potential targets for unscrupulous business practices. And seniors are sometimes reluctant to report fraud victimization out of embarrassment, or even fear of losing their independence or control of financial decision-making.

DPOR's **Hotline for Older Virginians: (804) 367-2178** is a resource for senior citizens and their families. An informative brochure – *What Seniors Should Know Before Hiring a Contractor* – is available free-of-charge (or for download via the website). In addition, **on-line Consumer Guides** provide advice on avoiding elder fraud in five areas under the agency's purview:

- **Construction and Home Improvement Scams.** *Older Virginians are especially vulnerable to construction scams because so many own their own homes but cannot do their own repairs.*
- **Fair Housing.** *Virginia law prohibits discrimination on the basis of “elderliness,” defined as age 55 and older for purposes of fair housing.*
- **Buying a Hearing Aid.** *More than 22 million Americans of all ages experience hearing impairments, seven million of whom are over age 69.*
- **Cemeteries and Pre-Need Burial Contracts.** *In times of loss and grief, consumers of all ages – not only senior citizens – can be more vulnerable to fraud.*
- **Buying Eyeglasses and Choosing an Optician.** *Nearly 160 million Americans of all ages wear eyeglasses or contact lenses to correct their vision. Of persons aged 55 and older, more than two-thirds wear corrective eyewear.*

During Older Americans Month – and throughout the year – Virginians can learn more about protecting themselves, their aging parents, relatives, and friends by calling the DPOR Hotline at (804) 367-2178 or by visiting www.dpor.virginia.gov.

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About DPOR

The Virginia Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation (DPOR) administers and enforces laws regulating 31 commercial occupations and certain professions. The agency licenses or certifies more than 260,000 individuals and businesses ranging from architects and contractors to cosmetologists and professional wrestlers.

DPOR investigates reports of regulatory violations by licensees; pursues complaints of criminal activity by unlicensed practitioners; responds to business-related consumer inquiries and requests for license checks; administers recovery funds for consumers harmed in contractor or real estate transactions; and conducts mediation services and public awareness campaigns.



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For more information, visit DPOR online at www.dpor.virginia.gov.